

Project:

New Secondary School

File Reference :

52-53 Russell Square, London, WC1B 4HP

Date :

2262/ 10

April 2017_Revision 1

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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Change of Use Application

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1. Use and Need

The brief is to provide a new Secondary School for a private French international School that offers the French curriculum and bi-lingual education. The School has an existing Primary School nearby in Bedford Square, and now wants to open a small - 180 place - Secondary School to complement their Primary School offer.

2. Amount

This Change of Use Application does not seek to increase any floor area. The existing building extends to 1,388 sqm Gross Internal Area, over six floors (Basement, Ground and Four Upper Floors). The School have chosen this building as closely meeting their needs in terms of its size, range of internal accommodation and for its location in close proximity to their current School.

3. Existing Building

52-53 Russell Square are two terraced buildings built c1800 by James Burton and designed as a continuous terrace forming part of the south side of Russell Square. The buildings are Grade II Listed. The terrace of which 52-53 are part is well preserved, and mostly unaltered to the front, but has numerous amendments and additions to the rear. No 52 forms the corner to Bedford Place, so is viewed on the side as well as the front elevation. From site inspection, the rear of 52-53 seems to have been re-built in part, the lower part being soot stained and the upper part being faced in a cleaner brick, suggesting that the buildings were damaged by bombing during World War II and were subsequently rebuilt. The Landowner remains the Bedford Estates; the current occupants are the Chartered Institute of Public Relations who moved there in 2009.

While the exterior of the building that is seen from the street has been preserved close to its original form, the interior has been modified over time, which is positive in terms of the new proposals seeking to make more adaptations.

The building extends over six floor levels: Basement, Ground floor and four upper floors. The main houses to the front contain generally one or two large rooms per level, with a smaller secondary room per level facing to the rear. Toilets and ancillary accommodation are located off the single central staircase which rises the full height of the building and is flanked also by the lift which rises full height.

The extension to no. 53 is a modern two-storey addition with a single open-plan room on each floor level. The extension to no. 52 appears more original, and spans the basement and ground floor linked with a modern spiral staircase.

4. Proposals

This Application is for a Change of Use only. The existing accommodation of the buildings will be converted from office and training use to School use. The School entrance and reception and visitor rooms will be accommodated in the Ground Floor suite of spaces. The larger rooms on the upper floors will house classrooms and assembly / seminar rooms; the smaller rooms will be used for small group working and resources. The top floor will contain staff accommodation.

5. Landscaping

The external areas within the land ownership are limited to two small courtyards between the main houses and the rear extensions, and lightwells to the front spanned over by the entrance stairs. These existing spaces are currently hard paved, and there are no changes proposed in this Application apart from the placement of a loose-laid frame in the rear ground level courtyard supporting 3no. Cycle racks adjacent the existing frame of 3 cycle racks. This frame will not be fixed down, security being provided by the frames being linked together and its location in the inner courtyard.

6. Appearance:

There are no proposed changes to the appearance of the building in this Application.

7. Access Statement:

Ecole Jeannine Manuel and Ellis Williams Architects are aware of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The proposals described here seek to provide a fully accessible new building in accordance with the Act within the constraints imposed by the existing Listed Building. Accessibility to all areas will be integral to the design and in compliance with Building Regulations Approved Document M. A full description of the detailed provisions will be submitted for Building Control approval in due course.

The School will maintain two principal entrances in the current locations: the one from Bedford Place providing level approach and access, and from there lift access to all internal floors. Appropriate highlighting will be maintained as existing to all ramps, handrails and entrance doors.

A Document M compliant lift exists in the building and will be retained providing level wheelchair access to all floor levels and all occupied rooms for staff and pupils both in the main original house and also the existing rear buildings.

Appropriate highlighting will be maintained as existing to all ramps, handrails and entrance doors. The principle entrance doors are large – exceeding the dimensions required in Document M for wheelchair access.

Internally within buildings, the following will be provided:

- Stairs/ stepped approaches will have maintain the current non-slip surfacing (carpet tiles) and contrasting nosing and handrails.
- Appropriate tonal differences will be maintained as existing which gives definition between walls and floors as defined in the Building Regulations within the limitations of the Listed Building.
- Within classrooms, the internal surfaces will receive acoustic treatment through introduction of furniture to provide acoustic environments in accordance with BB93 requirements for speech intelligibility, helping those with hearing impairments.
- Signage will be provided in accordance with the Building Regulations requirements and RNIB guidance.
- Doors will be retained as existing, most of which are panelled heritage solid doors which form part of the Listed Building. Doors into classrooms are wide enough to allow wheelchair access following Document M guidance for existing buildings. A number of the main rooms are accessed by wide double doors at present.
 - Lighting exists at present sufficient to give appropriate levels of lighting for wayfinding in and around buildings and give good illumination at face level.
 - An accessible toilet already exists at Ground Level level and will be retained. The WC is located centrally in the plan, and linked by the nearby lift to the upper floors to give the shortest travel distance from each classroom.